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SUBJECT: NRC: RUSSIA DISCOUNTS IRANIAN THREAT AND OFFERS
"EITHER/OR" MISSILE DEFENSE PACKAGE

Classified By: Charge Richard G. Olson for reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (S) Summary: In the July 25 NATO-Russia Council (NRC) meeting, Russian MFA Director of Disarmament Antonov and LTG Buzinskiy gave lengthy presentations on Russia's offer to the United States on missile defense (MD) cooperation in a transparent attempt to drive wedges within the Alliance. The Russian delegation stressed that its offer could not be combined with the US system, and that the US must abandon MD work in Europe before this collaborative effort could begin. The Russians offered their radars in Gabala and Armavir to assess the Iranian threat (i.e., by monitoring missile tests) with an interested "pool of countries." From data provided by the radars, the MD pool could assess if a threat exists and if so, how to counter it. The Russians strongly disputed the existence of an Iranian threat; Russian Ambassador Totskiy, however, called on the NRC to restart a ballistic missile threat assessment that was abandoned in 2004 due to lack of consensus. Ambassador Nuland noted that Allies and Russia all agree that Iran bears watching and said the US program has nothing to freeze since we have not begun work on it. Growing in confidence on this issue, Allied Permanent Representatives contested many of the Russian political and technical assumptions. End Summary.

Threat, what threat?

12. (S) MFA Director of Disarmament and International Security Anatoliy Antonov, LTG Evgeniy Buzinskiy, and a briefer (Col Illyen) questioned the Iranian threat, and contended it was not real because Iran does not have a sufficient industrial, scientific, and technological base to develop long-range missiles. According to the Russian experts, even if Iran had the technological base, it would take 10 to 15 years to deploy long range systems. Antonov stated that the international sanctions on Iran have been effective in preventing it from developing long-range systems; in addition, Iran cannot modify SCUDs into long-range systems. Antonov questioned why Iran would ever attack Europe since Iran is looking to integrate with the world community and not isolate itself. He said Iran's political and economic interests in Europe make an attack from Iran unthinkable.

13. (S) Allies pushed back on Russia's assessment of the Iranian threat. France said, "we have analyzed the threat and the reality of the threat cannot be questioned at the basic level." Denmark questioned the divergence of the

perceived Iranian threat between Russia and the Allies and asked how two very different conclusions could be reached from the same set of facts. The UK welcomed US plans and assurances to cover Allies against the Iranian threat. Ambassador Nuland observed that all NRC members recognize the Iranian threat, but Allies see it as more advanced than the Russians.

CHOICE BETWEEN RUSSIAN OFFER AND US SYSTEM

¶4. (S) The Russians briefed Allies on their proposals put forward by President Putin at the G-8 Summit in Heiligendamm and at the US/Russia Summit in Kennebunkport (Russian proposal emailed to EUR). General Buzinskiy said the GOR was prepared to share data from its radars in Gabala, Azerbaijan and Armavir in southern Russia. The radars could provide data on the Iranian and other Middle Eastern threats out to the year 2020. Using this data, a "pool of states" could then accurately assess the threat by monitoring any ballistic missile tests. When the threat warranted, the pool of states could respond appropriately. The Russians repeatedly emphasized that the United States must freeze all missile defense activity in Europe as a precondition to the Russian offer. Antonov argued that the Russian proposal would provide equal security for NATO and Russia, reduce costs, and prevent a new arms race in Europe.

¶5. (S) Russia proposed expanding the Joint Data Exchange Center (JDEC) by making it multilateral and adding another center in Brussels. (NOTE: JDEC, a bilateral US/Russian initiative in Moscow, never become operational. End note) Russia would like to open this project to all European states

-- multilateral crews would acquire and process real-time data on detected missile launches. Buzinskiy noted Gabala and Armavir would be the primary radars but others could be added.

¶6. (S) Allies questioned many of the Russian political and technical assumptions. The UK asserted that Allies cannot leave themselves open to missile attack from rogue states and therefore must have the capability to intercept a rogue missile. Spain and Belgium stated forcefully that the security of the Alliance is indivisible. France said a US site in Europe in no way threatens Russia's strategic deterrent. Spain, the UK, and the US questioned the capabilities of the Russian radars to track an Iranian missile launch throughout its full trajectory in view of their location.

¶7. (S) Ambassador Nuland welcomed the Russian offer of two radars and noted the progress that has been made in the NRC on missile defense: we all agree that Iran bears watching and that forward-based radars can play a useful role. She noted that Russia agrees on the need for interceptors at some point. (NOTE: Russian proposal lacked interceptors, but one slide showed US interceptors (Aegis and PAC-3) based in the Mediterranean and Turkey, implying that these systems were sufficient to deal with a minimal Iranian threat. End note) She also robustly defended the planned US MD system.

"TO BE CONTINUED"

¶8. (S) The Secretary General wrapped up the session with the words, "to be continued." Spain, Denmark, UK, and Belgium all called for more dialogue on this issue in the NRC. Ambassador Nuland called for a reinforced NRC on missile defense in the Fall.

¶9. (S) Ambassador Totskiy called on the NRC nonproliferation working group to restart work on a ballistic missile threat assessment. He noted that this working group did not reach consensus on the 2004 assessment because of an issue not linked to ballistic missiles (biological weapons), and

therefore he is optimistic that consensus could be achieved on ballistic missile assessment. (NOTE: Russia has already stated its conclusions on the Iranian threat (i.e., that no threat exists). Therefore, finding consensus on an NRC ballistic missile threat assessment would be a long slog. End Note.)

COMMENT

¶10. (S) The Russian presentation mirrored the US presentation in the NRC on April 19 in form and substance. This was not lost on Allies, who commented afterwards that the Russian presentation was much more polished than previous Russian interventions in the NRC on MD. Even hapless Ambassador Totskiy kept to his script.

¶11. (S) The Russian proposal cannot replace US missile defense since it deals only with monitoring Iranian ballistic missile tests. We need to move Russia beyond its "either/or" proposal by maintaining Allied unity. France gave a particularly strong intervention, but Germany -- a principal target of the Russian wedge driving campaign -- stayed silent. Ultimately, once the GOR realizes MD in Europe is inevitable, perhaps, it will abandon its campaign and seriously turn attention to areas of potential cooperation. End Comment.
OLSON